

Inside Out

Holding the Child Within

Diaries from Drop+Kiss...+

Nana Hinase

Synopsis

Inside Out tells the true story of Nana Hinase, who, since early childhood, has sensed within her a lonely little girl, always waiting for someone to come. At sixteen, Nana begins a diary with a decision: to be honest with herself. She writes for twenty years without knowing what lay ahead; her diaries and poems form a three-act narrative whose connections become fully apparent only at the end. Learning to recognize and care for that child is its central movement.

Much of this writing first appeared on *Drop+Kiss...+*, her website. The diary brings readers close to feelings as Nana struggles to find words for them; the poems give memorable form to this experience. Clinical psychologist Hiroyuki Uchida, Ph.D., formerly an associate professor at Osaka University, served as the book's editorial supervisor and contributes a foreword reflecting on the therapeutic relationship at the heart of the book. Readers of the Japanese edition have described finding their own feelings in Nana's words, and one reader was moved to reconsider why she herself keeps a diary.

Listening to her feelings leads Nana toward the past those feelings disclose, and facing that past changes how she experiences herself and the world. A discovery in the epilogue then reveals a further meaning in the act of writing. Drawing on Jung's child archetype, the book connects Nana's particular experience to the vulnerable source of wonder, hope, and vitality within each of us.

The narrative draws on Nana's contemporaneous writings and more than seven hundred pages of clinical records. Ethical considerations and the necessary rights and permissions have been addressed in preparing the material for publication.

Part One

Emotion Is the Language of the Soul

The first act establishes Nana's search through her attempts to give words to feelings she cannot yet understand. Her online writing brings her into contact with Aimi, who

responds deeply to her drawings, stories, and poems. Each wants the other to live, yet Nana cannot understand why her own life should matter so much. In psychotherapy, Counselor S's willingness to share her silence gradually allows her to trust him.

During a hospital stay in 2006, a vision of a blue bird brings a sudden certainty: "I am here." The experience becomes a guide for the journey ahead, even as the emptiness of ordinary life returns. Months later, Aimi dies.

Among Nana's readers is the man who will later become her husband and the book's narrator. As their relationship develops, Nana begins to discover that her feelings can reach another person. Grief, too, becomes something she can express without having to resolve it. The act closes with their first day together: a long summer walk through an empty park after a typhoon. As they part, he holds her, and she tells him it feels heavy—then finds that this weight is something she wants to keep.

Part Two

Facing Is an Act of Love

The second act follows the consequences of that new trust. Nana first reads Gide's *Strait Is the Gate* with bewilderment, unable to see what its lovers find in their separation. Then a family quarrel over a cake turns into a two-hour confrontation, and her younger sister's memory of a beating brings back what Nana herself had forgotten: she had stepped in—and, she now senses, had been struck. Other memories follow, along with gaps no account can fill, and Nana keeps asking what can be told of what is missing.

Seeing her own suffering changes how she understands Aimi's: her continuing life, she realizes, was what her friend most wanted to protect.

Marriage sharpens the conflict. Nana longs for a shared future but fears it means abandoning the little girl. A life-threatening crisis brings this to its limit; afterward, she resolves to let the child speak in her own words. The act closes with her wedding letter to her parents, written with gratitude and respect but without a lie, while her diary keeps both the injuries and her resolve not to give her life over to their demands.

Part Three

Perspective Shapes Perception; Perception Shapes Experience

The third act explores how this effort changes Nana's experience of being alive. Through psychotherapy and Focusing, she approaches feelings carried in the body. "I am here," first heard in the vision of the blue bird, returns as the felt presence of her own heartbeat. In a

pivotal sequence, overwhelmed by terror, she stops fighting it—and finds that she is still alive.

When S's illness abruptly ends nearly fourteen years of therapy, Nana faces another loss, as she once did with Aimi, and this time keeps hold of what she was given. Asked what one might think when facing death alone, she answers: "I'm glad I got to be with you." *Strait Is the Gate*, the novel that once bewildered her, now reads as a story of trust. In 2019, she is baptized—giving outward form to a longing for something beyond herself, one that each reader may call by a name of their own. In the closing poem, the figure who once waited for light runs toward it.

Epilogue

After Nana's sudden death in 2024, her husband discovers that the diary he thought she had stopped keeping had continued in private. For more than a year he works through over ten million characters of her writing alongside her clinical records, unable to escape the suspicion that every reading is his own projection. Understanding arrives quietly: at the center of everything was the child within—the sacred child, innocent and easily wounded, that she had lost when she was young and spent her life seeking. The hidden pages had been written for that child alone; once written with a reader in mind, they would no longer have belonged to the child alone.

He says little more, letting the late entries speak. In one, Nana resolves to live like a flower that blooms because there was water and sunlight, and finds it enough—indeed, the very reason—that an innocent girl may pick it. "That girl is me," she writes. In another, she feels herself, gradually, to be a small being worthy of love. The final poem speaks of a love through which we become connected and free.